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Feisty cardinal declares Philippines will survive Marcos, communism

By Edward Neilan
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Cardinal Jaime Sin, the highest ranking prelate of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, said yesterday his country will survive both the threat of communism and the abuses of the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos.

"There aren't many communists in the Philippines," the Catholic leader told a National Press Club audience, "but their ranks will increase unless the government abuses end. The abuses of the government are so many that they inadvertently strengthen the communists and others who have gone into the hills to fight.

"We need a new face, new leadership, so that these abuses will end," Cardinal Sin said in the most stinging criticism of Mr. Marcos yet during his current visit, which has included stops in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

"Americans were our liberators," the cardinal said. "Send us economic aid. What the people need now is food."

The Philippines primate, who says he stands for "reconciliation not revolution," said he had talks here this week with Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost, former U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, and other officials.

He said he told them the same thing he told President Reagan in a meeting last fall:

"Don't send us weapons. There is no war in our country, and if you give us weapons, the government will just be killing Filipinos."

Mr. Marcos and Cardinal Sin have had a running public disagreement over the policies and practices of Mr. Marcos' administration. Last October, the president accused the prelate of fanning "the flames of rebellion" and encouraging violence by calling on Filipinos to join street demonstrations against the government.

In that sharpest public attack ever on Cardinal Sin, Mr. Marcos accused him of violating the constitution and "trying to destabilize the government." The archbishop of Manila said it was "an insult to Filipinos" to suggest that there were no leaders capable of succeeding Mr. Marcos as president. "I can give you a list of several thousand, but I'd better not mention any names here," he said. The cardi-

nal said it would be up to the people to judge if the president's wife, Imelda Marcos, were qualified to succeed her husband.

Cardinal Sin was asked yesterday if the situation in the Philippines was as serious as that in Poland.

"Poland is more difficult. In the Philippines, we can still talk," the Catholic leader said. "The other evening the president invited me to his home for dinner. He said he was not pleased with me. I told him I was not pleased with him."

Cardinal Sin said Mr. Marcos said to him: "I am asking forgiveness for mistakes I have made."

"I was impressed that a man of such power and pride as the president would make such a statement," Cardinal Sin said.

The communist insurgency in the Philippines has caused heightened concern in Washington following assessments by American analysts in Manila that the New People's Army is progressing so rapidly that it could reach a "strategic stalemate" with the Philippine government's 200,000-man armed forces within three years.

The assessment came out of a three-day series of meetings among U.S. and Filipino officials in Manila in early May presided over by CIA Director William Casey.

At least 3,000 Filipinos died last year in fighting between the government and guerrillas in 59 of the country's 73 provinces. In the first three months of this year, 349 people were killed in southernmost Davao province alone.

U.S. concern is over the possibility that communist gains may destabilize the

country, where American investments total more than \$3 billion and where key Clark Air Base and the U.S. Navy's Subic Bay installation provide a counterweight to the Soviet base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

Cardinal Sin said he rejected the "liberation theology" of violence advocated by "renegade priest" Father Conrado Balweg of Iloco province.

"It cannot be through violence that we solve problems," he said.